

JOHN A. YARMUTH
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
3RD DISTRICT, KENTUCKY

COMMITTEE ON
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1703

May 28, 2010

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The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Chairman Genachowski:

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is in the process of considering rates for Video Relay Service (VRS), I am writing to emphasize the importance of this service to the deaf community.

Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the FCC to ensure that interstate and intrastate telecommunications relay services are available, to the extent possible and in the most efficient manner, to hearing impaired and speech impaired individuals. VRS allows people who are deaf and hard of hearing to connect instantly to the world and communicate in their own language, providing what most of the deaf community considers the most functionally equivalent form of relay service currently available.

That is why I urge the Commission to adopt a VRS rate that is fair, predictable, and accounts for the actual costs of providing the service – including the cost of customer equipment and installation and future innovation. In addition, the Commission should continue its careful management and oversight to preserve the VRS program to ensure ASL users have access to adequate and efficient communication services.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 5, 2010

The Honorable John Yarmuth
U.S. House of Representatives
435 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Yarmuth:

Thank you for your letter regarding the reimbursement rate for Video Relay Service (VRS). I share your support for VRS, which has become a critical communications tool for many who are deaf or hard of hearing.

On June 28, 2010, the Commission unanimously adopted two items to address immediate and long-term approaches for sustaining the vital Telecommunications Relay Services, of which VRS is one form. In an *Order*, the Commission sets interim VRS rates for the July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011 period at \$6.2390 for Tier I, \$6.2335 for Tier II, and \$5.0668 for Tier III. These rates represent the average of the current tiered rates and NECA's proposed rates based on actual, historical costs. The *Order* notes that these rates also reflect a balance between the goal of ensuring that VRS providers recover from the VRS Fund only the reasonable costs caused by their provision of VRS and the goal of ensuring quality and sufficient service during a one-year period.

The other item adopted on June 28 is a *Notice of Inquiry* to take a fresh look at the VRS rules with an eye to ensuring that this vital program remains effective, efficient, and sustainable in the future. The *Notice* poses questions that delve into many cost and reimbursement related issues, seeking to make the program less susceptible to the waste, fraud, and abuse that have plagued the current program. Bringing clarity and predictability to VRS compensation is high on the Commission's list of priorities, and we will resolve this proceeding as expeditiously as possible. I am enclosing a copy of the Commission's News Release for your information.

I appreciate your continuing interest in this very important matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski